

BOAS (F.)

Notes on the Eskimo of  
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*Compliment of  
the author*

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NOTES ON THE ESKIMO OF PORT CLARENCE,  
ALASKA.

DURING the past spring I had the good fortune to fall in with a party of Eskimo from Port Clarence, Alaska, who stopped in Chicago on their way to Washington. The party was in charge of Capt. Miner W. Bruce, to whom I am under great obligations for his kindness and assistance.

I desired particularly to ascertain if certain traditions, which are of great importance in the mythology of the eastern Eskimo, are found in Alaska also, and if the peculiar secret language of the Angakut is known to the tribes of the extreme West. Following are the results of my fragmentary inquiries:—

The Greenland tale of the mistress of the sea animals is known. According to the Alaskan tradition, a girl was thrown overboard by her father. She clung to the gunwale of the boat. Then the father cut off the joints of her hands and fingers, one after the other. The first joints were transformed into salmon, the second into seals, the third into walrus, the metacarpal bones into whales. I could not obtain any further information in regard to the tradition.

The following sun myth is of interest as showing clearly influences of the mythology of the Indians who inhabit the coast of southern Alaska:—

Once upon a time the people were assembled in a singing house. While they were dancing the sun disappeared, and nobody knew what had become of it. The people were unable to go hunting, and soon all their provisions were exhausted. Then they told the women to mend their clothing carefully, and to make as many boots as possible. These they put into bags and set out in search of the sun. It was dark all the time. They followed the seacoast, and went so long that they wore out their boots. Then they took new ones from their travelling-bags. After many days they came to a country which swarmed with seals, walrus, and deer. There they found a people whose language they did not understand. After some time, however, they learned to converse with them. They asked these people if they had seen the sun. The latter replied that they would come to five places. At the fifth place there lived a woman who had both the sun and the moon in her house. Then they went on. It was very cold, and they ran as fast as they could in order to keep warm. When their provisions began to run short, they reached another country which swarmed with game. They found a people whose language they did not understand, but after some time they were able to converse with each other. There they obtained the





same information as before, and went on. It was very cold, and they ran as fast as they could, in order to keep warm. When their provisions began to run short, they reached a third country which swarmed with game. They met a people whose language they did not understand. After some time they were able to converse, and upon their inquiries they were told that at the second place which they would reach there lived a woman named Itudlu'qpiaq, who had both sun and moon, but that it was very doubtful if they would be able to obtain it. Then they went on. It was very cold, and they ran as fast as they could, in order to keep warm. When their provisions began to run low, they reached a country which swarmed with game. There they found dwarfs, who tried to escape when they saw the strong men coming. They caught them, however, and learned that at the next place they would find the house of Itudlu'qpiaq, who had both sun and moon.

They went on. On their way they found ice and driftwood obstructing their way, but they kicked it aside. At that time the people were very strong and able to lift heavy stones. After they had gone a long time they saw a singing house. When they came near, they went very slowly, because they were afraid. At last one of the men tied his jacket around his waist and tied his pants around his knees. Then he crept cautiously through the entrance and put his head through the door in the bottom of the floor. He saw a young woman, Itudlu'qpiaq, sitting in the middle of the rear of the house. Her father was sitting in the middle of the right-hand side of the house, her mother in the middle of the left-hand side. In each of the rear corners a ball was hanging from the roof. At the right-hand side was a large ball, and at the left-hand side a smaller one. Then he whispered: "Itudlu'qpiaq, we came to ask you for some light." Then her mother said: "Give them the small ball." The man, however, refused and asked for the large ball. Then Itudlu'qpiaq took it down and gave it a kick. It fell right into the entrance hole. The people took it and ran outside. Then they tore the ball to pieces and the daylight came out of it. It was not warm at once, but it grew warmer day after day. If they had taken the small ball it would have been light, but it would have remained cold.

The myth almost invites the interpretation that it refers to the imprisonment of the sun during the polar night; but it must be remembered that the sun as a captive in a round box, and suspended from the rafters of a house, is one of the salient features of all the myths of the North Pacific coast. It is therefore likely that this tale, which is not known to the eastern Eskimo, is mainly due to Indian influences, and not an independent myth which had its origin in the observation of the changes of the seasons. The description

of an ancient race who were so strong that they were able to lift large stones is known in the East.

The myth of a woman who married a dog and who had ten children, five of whom were dogs, while the other five became the ancestors of the Eqidlit or Indians, is also known.

The Angakok language, examples of which from Baffin Land were given in vol. vii. p. 45, of this Journal, is very interesting. I obtained fifty words. Some of these are simply taken from dialects of neighboring tribes. It is worth remarking that, generally speaking, the Angakok word is found in the dialects of Greenland and Labrador, while the ordinary word may be unknown in these countries. This corroborates the view that the Angakok word represents an older form of speech. Some words are simply descriptive. A number of these agree with the descriptive words of the Angakok languages of the East, as, for instance, *pōuk* (bag), for mother. It is remarkable that some of the words in the Angakok languages of the East and of Alaska agree. For instance: *nujvik* (Alaska), *nubik* (Baffin Land), for house; *qumaxō'ak* (Alaska), *komaruak* (Greenland), for cariboo. The Greenland form of the last word was recorded before the distinction between *k* and *q* was clearly made. It is likely, from the analogy with the Alaskan form, that the word was *qomaruak*. The word for "dead" is interesting on account of its meaning, the literal translation being "falling through the hole."

English angakok	Ordinary Language. angakok	Angakok Language. qile'dlik	Remarks.
			Greenland: qilavoq, he practises sorcery; qitdlat, something used for bewitching a person.
aurora borealis	kō'riet	ta'rvit	
blood	auk	uivinji'qtoq	
blood in body (vein ?)		tōnmasungū'juq	
blanket	qipik	aumi'tit	Greenland: aumit, skin for wrapping corpse. Labr., bedding.
boat	umiaq	igdlervikjut	Greenland: igdlerpoq, he goes into the kayak
man's boat	qayaq	igdlī'run	
boy	qitungaq	mikiqtlē'a	mikijoj, small.
brother, my —	ane'ngiga	aniaqa'ta	
cariboo	tu'kto	{ qumaxō'ak tukidlik	Greenland, Angakok language: komaruak.
cloud	qilai'dlaq	sile'luktoq	Labrador: it is raining.
coat, water-tight —	ka'pitaq	mi'ngadluk	
dead	tō'xozuq	izuka'rtoq	= he falls through a hole.
dog	qimu'gun	qingmik	
drum	sau'yaq	imū'gaq	Greenland: imigpoq, it resounds.
drumstick	kasau'taq	qilau'saq	Greenland: qilaut, drum.



ears	siū'tik	nadlau'tik	Greenland: nâlagpoq, he listens.
eating	nirijoq	kuidla'soq	
European	neloa'rmiut	tanguit	tanguit, known in other Alaskan dialects.
eyes	issik	qingnau'tik	
father	atā'ta	pō'uk	= bag; in Greenland, used for mother only.
fox	pisuka'rsuq	pamie'dlik	= having a tail; pisuqā'ng in the Angakok language of Baffin's Land.
girl		qopasī'ak	
harpoon	ū'naq	angunē'un	Greenland: anguvâ, he catches it.
heart	ū'man	iqsa'roq	Greenland: pit of the stomach.
house, tent,		nujvik	Baffin Land, Angakok language: nū'bik.
singing house			
husband, my	ui'ga	angutau'nra	Greenland: angut, a man
ice	si'kyo	{ tō'uaq kitliq	
knife	sa'vik	ki'pun	= instrument for cutting crosswise.
woman's knife	u'dlu	kima'dlik	= having the handle of a woman's knife.
land	nū'na	ta'pqaq	Compare Greenland Angakok language: ta'rsoak (?).
man (homo)	inuk	tō'rnak	Compare Greenland Angakok language: taursak.
man (vir)	angut	qilamā'	
mittens	a'qētik	artilfaq	
mother, my	akaga	pō'uga	Greenland, Angakok language: pōuga.
orphan boy	iliya'rsuk	qoajā'k	Greenland traditions: quaitsâka'ka, my young ones.
(or boy?)			
paddle of kayak	pangau'tik	saxilau'tik	Labrador: saqikpâ, he pushes it away.
paddle of boat	angun	saxi'laun	
polar bear	nanuq	kigū'tilik	= having teeth.
sea	ta'rioq	imaq	Greenland: ocean.
seal, various kinds		umi'dlik, pl. umi'dlirit	= having a beard.
sick	kē'qsirtoq	na'ngitoq	
spirit	turngnaq	qile'tga (my —)	See angakok.
stone	uyaraq	{ sī'maq, pl. sī'mēit qa'dluk, pl. qa'dlut	known in other Alaskan dialects.
sun	ma'saq	siri'niq	known in other Alaskan dialects, Greenland.
walrus	aiviq	tugā'dlik	having tusks.
water	imiq	sinaq	(= shore?)
whale	aqbiq	sarpilik	= having a whale's tail.
wife, my	nulia'ga	seni'dliē	= worker.
wind	anu're	sayu'qartoq	
woman	arnaq	nuliē'siaq	Compare nule, wife.
wolf, wolverine, bear		kajū'ptelik	



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